

Senate passed by Unanimous Consent S. 2101, the Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Human Rights Acts of 2012 (ISHRA). The bill significantly increases pressure on Iran's leaders and I thank my colleagues for their support of this important measure. As we begin negotiations with our counterparts in the House, I want to expand on my comments from my earlier statement. I do so in order to provide my colleagues some clarification regarding a few provisions in the bill.

First, section 201 of the Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Human Rights Acts of 2012 will impose sanctions, for the first time, against entities involved in joint ventures to develop petroleum resources outside of Iran that are established on or after January 1, 2002. Those joint ventures which qualify are joint ventures which involve the Government of Iran as a substantial partner or investor, or through which Iran could receive technological knowledge or equipment not previously available to it that could contribute to its ability to develop domestic petroleum resources. Further, even if ancillary agreements to implement an existing pre-2002 joint venture are agreed to on or after January 1, 2002, sanctions are not authorized to be imposed against any third-party to that joint venture or against persons who provide goods, services, technology or information to such a joint venture, as a result of their participation in or dealings with such venture, by virtue of such ancillary agreements.

In addition, this legislation seeks to continue the long-standing tradition of ensuring that humanitarian trade, including agricultural commodities, food, medicine and medical products is specifically exempted by Congress from sanctions, on the condition that such trade be licensed by the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control, or OFAC. It is becoming more apparent that U.S. financial sanctions targeting Iran's banking sector are causing increased concern among businesses and banks of our allies. The fear is that engaging in humanitarian trade in the current sanctions environment might lead to sanctions for legitimately licensed humanitarian trade.

However, it is not and has not been the intent of U.S. policy to harm the Iranian people by prohibiting humanitarian trade that is licensed by the U.S. Treasury Department. OFAC consistently issues many licenses, both general and specific, for this type of trade. The practical financing difficulties arising today between banks and those engaging in licensed humanitarian trade can be best addressed by U.S. Government officials, who should do more to make it clear that no U.S. sanctions will be imposed against third-country banks that facilitate OFAC-licensed or exempted humanitarian trade. The Administration must make that clear in public statements, in private meetings with foreign financial institutions, and elsewhere as appropriate.

Misinterpretation of U.S. law by foreign financial institutions should no longer deny the people of Iran the benefit of OFAC-approved humanitarian trade.

I want to close by again thanking my colleagues for their support of ISHRA. I think this action sends an important message to the Iranians and the world that the U.S. will continue to increase sanctions until Iran verifiably abandons its illicit nuclear program. As we begin our work with the House, I will continue to press for the strongest and most effective sanctions legislation possible.

I yield the floor.

#### CUBAN INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Madam President, today I wish to commemorate the 110th anniversary of Cuba's independence. On May 20, 1902, after a series of rebellions against foreign rule, Cuba finally gained its freedom from the Spanish empire. I am honored to join with Cubans around the world in commemorating this day.

At the same time, we must remember that the island nation still remains under the tyranny of an authoritarian regime. We can never forget that the Castro regime continues to jail its political opponents, and it still holds an American hostage. Once again, I rise today to urge the Cuban regime in the strongest possible terms to immediately and unconditionally release Mr. Alan Gross.

Today, we reaffirm our solidarity with the people of Cuba. Now more than ever, the United States must continue policies that promote respect for the fundamental principles of political freedom, democracy, and human rights, in a manner consistent with the aspirations of the people of Cuba.

#### CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT BUILDING IN ETHIOPIA

Mr. BEGICH. Madam President, to mark the occasion of President Obama's Camp David G8 Summit focusing, in part, on the problem of food security in Africa, I want to take this opportunity to address the necessity for the United States to help foster stable and democratic nations as partners as we build multilateral coalitions to tackle global issues like hunger and poverty.

Alaska is a long way from Africa, but the citizens of my State are committed to a stable and prosperous Africa. Many Alaskans contribute their time and resources toward this goal.

A year ago in Deauville, France, President Obama joined other leaders of the G8 in reaffirming that "democracy lays the best path to peace, stability, prosperity, shared growth and development." As the events in North Africa and the Middle East have shown, supporting reliable autocrats who are helpful on matters of security and economics at the expense of human dig-

nity, basic democratic rights, and access to economic opportunity is more perilous than ever to long-term U.S. national security interests.

It is for this reason that I make a few points about our reliable partner in the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia. Two weeks ago at the World Economic Forum, Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi made hopeful remarks about the virtues of democratic society. I publically commit my continuing support for efforts to make such important principles a reality in Ethiopia. It is in the U.S. interest to match Ethiopia's progress in economic development and poverty reduction with movement toward economic opportunity, social justice and judicial independence. It has been said that basic human rights and free and fair elections are nothing but dreams for all except for the developed countries of the world. I do not believe that to be true; Ethiopia is ready to realize that dream. To foster the benefits of a diverse citizenry, the many political prisoners and journalists should be released, the Charities and Societies Act, as designed and as it is implemented, should be prevented from strangling peaceful civil society advocacy.

Beginning in 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt and Ethiopian Emperor Menelik II launched a long and mutually beneficial history of working together on important geopolitical and economic strategic partnerships that last to this day. Our friend and partner, Ethiopia, has been a champion with the United States during many critical times for almost 110 years. When Italy invaded Ethiopia, we refused to recognize the conquest. When the United States asked for help during the Cold War, Haile Selassie was ready to help. When the regime of Mengistu Haile-Mariam failed, the United States came to Ethiopia's side with help to prevent violence in Addis Ababa, by facilitating Mengistu's departure. We gave this support for the mutual benefit and promise of democratization in Ethiopia.

Ethiopia's macroeconomic successes of rapid growth rates and better than average performance in poverty reduction have been celebrated at this past week's G8 Summit, and at the recent World Economic Forum. There Prime Minister Meles pondered aloud:

What is the substantive political thing that creates such an environment [of fair economic opportunity for all citizens]? The one [thing] that creates such an environment is an engaged citizenry that is able to create an environment where corruption and loot cannot happen at the lower level, at the mid-level, at the higher level, and that goes beyond elections every four and five years.

On the microeconomic level, aside from the lack of progress on land reform, this is good news indeed, given recent complaints about poor state of economic opportunity for all of Ethiopia's citizens. We are hopeful this is a sign that Ethiopia's federal ministries are ready to engage and assist the local citizenry in issues that relate to their